

I have been a public high school teacher in the State of Connecticut for the past 28 years. I was educated in public schools in Connecticut and graduated from the University of Connecticut and the University of Hartford. I currently have two daughters attending public schools in Connecticut.

I have a great commitment to education in this state.

Formalized standards are welcomed in education. That being said, the standards must be relevant and the execution of those standards must be pragmatic. The current Common Core Standards and their execution is abysmal to say the least. There is an over reliance on testing and a constant perceived need of data to justify the testing. Much of what goes on in a classroom cannot be quantified by testing or sporadic observations.

Standardized testing has no place in Kindergarten and most of the primary grades. Putting pressure on teachers and young children to perform on standardized tests hinders the educational process. Focusing on a test rather than on learning to learn will set our educational system back. Some form of standardized test may be appropriate at the 5th or 6th grade and even then the data value may be questionable. The tests should probably be more diagnostic to find out what students need and how to better teach the students. They should not be evaluative.

It appears that the State of Connecticut is more interested in evaluating teachers rather than promoting student achievement. The System for Educator Evaluation and Development (SEED) is a sad attempt to evaluate and supposedly promote student achievement through teacher improvement.

This year schools across the State are administering the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium practice test (SBAC). The "data" that is going to come out of these tests will be unreliable. When the Governor and other high ranking officials decided to ease the implementation of SEED and the Common Core earlier this year, astute high school students realized that these tests were just pilot tests and that they did not count for anything. If these officials had spent any time in high schools recently they would know that as soon as students are informed that an assignment does not count their motivation to perform well disappears. Their attitude is "if this does not count then why are we doing it" and they do not care about the outcome. Reliable data?

My 12 year old daughter in 7th grade comes home to me and laments about what she is not learning in school. As teachers attempt to implement the Common Core Standards with little or no training there is a knee-jerk reaction to teach to the test. The amount of work to meet Common Core Standards and perform well on standardized testing is taking her love of school and learning away. The implementation of Common Core Curriculum and SEED is stealing from our children.

Across this state countless public educators (your children's teachers) are required to learn and implement the State's new System for Educator Evaluation and Development (SEED). To implement this new program there is an extensive web site, along with an 80 page handbook to guide educators. The state has also enlisted the services of a company that maintains a website for teachers to enter goals, data, and evidence. The training alone to implement this program has

taken thousands of man hours away from educators that could have been used for developing and evaluating effective lessons for students and (heaven forbid) actually instructing students.

SEED's intent is to identify and develop content and qualities that define excellent teaching, but the SEED program is so unnecessarily complicated and convoluted that it misses the point. The process needs to be simplified and streamlined so as to not take educators away from their primary mission. The focus should be on student achievement, not on the process. All educators want to do what is best for children.

Where's the Development part of SEED? The only Development for many educators this year has been on how to implement the SEED program and how use the software that is part of this package. There has been little or no staff development in learning skills/strategies to improve student achievement. When you count the number of hours spent by all of the teachers in the State of Connecticut involved in this program and the hours taken from meaningful activities directly related to student achievement it is inexplicable.

The amount of "paperwork" (most of the forms are electronic) and the time required to learn the software and complete the paperwork is exhaustive. There are forms to fill out to create and outline goals. The goals then have to be attached to Common Core Standards and then there is are pre-observation forms and a pre-observation conference and post observation forms and a post-observation conference. I have completed the forms and have spoken to numerous colleagues and all agree that it takes two to three hours to complete the paperwork prior to an evaluator entering their classroom. This does not include the time necessary to select and upload "artifacts" (student work) to the website to provide evidence that what is stated in the forms is verifiable. Every hour spent in training, meeting, and filling out these forms is an hour stolen from our students. This process is causing undue stress and angst for teachers as they have to use time once available for lesson planning, correcting, and extra extra-help for students to now fill out forms and meet to discuss the forms.

I know one teacher who spent over two hours filling out the pre-observation paperwork for an evaluator to come spend ½ hour observing her teach. She was then given an average/proficient rating because the evaluator did not observe many of the "check-off" items on the evaluation form. There is no provision on the evaluation for "Did not observe." Had the evaluator observed the entire class they would have observed many of these other items that they checked off as average and may have rated her Exemplary.

Every citizen and taxpayer in the State of Connecticut should examine this program for what it is, a bureaucratic smoke and mirrors exercise. Apparently the State Department of Education believes that more bureaucracy and mountains of paperwork is the magic elixir to improve student achievement. Effective teaching cannot be distilled into a few pages of student learning objectives and a half-hour classroom observation.

Much of what a good teacher does cannot be quantified by a test or observed in the classroom. Building trust and meaningful relationships with students cannot be measured by a test or found in any form. Yet these factors play a large role in how a student learns. Coaching a sport, advising a club, going to a student performance...just caring for students is part of being an

effective teacher. Where are these measured in the SEED process? The art of teaching cannot be distilled and effectively measured by the System for Educator Evaluation and Development.

Once again the taxpayers of Connecticut are paying for more bureaucracy at the state level that trickles down to each and every classroom. We pay teachers to teach our children not fill out endless forms that have no direct correlation to student achievement. I know of no data that supports the premise that the completion of hours' worth of forms equates to improved student achievement.

The website that is used to administer SEED is currently being funded by the State. (The State will say that it is free as long as they purchase \$75.00 worth of resources for every teacher.) How long will this remain free? The software was not fully developed at the beginning of the year and is still a work in progress. What happens when the State chooses to no longer fund this service but requires school districts to maintain electronic teacher evaluations under this model. Will this become another unfunded state mandate placed upon the local boards of education?

As a taxpayer and a professional educator I object to the use of taxpayer dollars being spent on a program that has no data to prove direct benefits to students. The cost in man hours and dollars has already had a deleterious effect on education in this state.

This program has stolen time away from students and had a negative effect on staff morale. It's not that educators object to being held accountable; teachers are always looking for feedback on how to improve their instruction. The problem is the unnecessary complexity of the SEED process and time taken away from activities that directly affect students.

The intent of the Connecticut teacher evaluation program is honorable. Its form and execution is appalling.

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